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ABSTRACT

Discourse analysis, as an approach to text, provides the teacher, student, and professional translator with resources for achieving objectivity and for making and justifying translation decisions. It offers a strategy for relating the problems and processes and discourse and the specific concerns to the objectives of the translator. It can be applied in translating all kinds of texts, scientific, legal, religious, or other. The elements addressed in discourse analysis include various text types, texture of the text, text coherence and cohesion, context and co-text, dimension (communicative, pragmatic, or semiotic), discourse (language in use) as distinguished from text (structured language sequence), genre, and register. There are two fundamental advances in translation theory attributable to discourse analysis: that (1) the relevant language unit for translating is the entire text, not the single word or sentence; and (2) dimension and co-text are indispensable for interpreting and processing source and target texts. Discourse analysis has moved away from former approaches that perceived translation as applying grammatical rules and referring to a dictionary, revealing the limitations of a bilingual dictionary as a translation tool and successfully dealing with the complex relationships between meaning, culture, and language. (MSE)

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Discourse Analysis and the Translator

Introduction

Discourse linguistics has led to the development of an approach to translating which draws on the work of researchers in many disciplines: sociolinguistics, semiotics, pragmatics, cultural studies in their broadest sense (history, politics, literature, psychology, philosophy, etc.), and language studies. It has provided the possibility of creating a model of the translating process, that is, creating a set of categories or parameters which can assist in ensuring consistency and accuracy in translating and translation. The method derived from this model is discourse analysis.

The term discourse analysis has a wide range of acceptations. It has been used, for example, to refer to the interaction of translation and language studies, and to the view of language not as an isolated phenomenon but related to the world around and to other disciplines. Discourse analysis in translating refers to a method that is holistic, dealing not with single words or sentences but with entire constituents of an act of communication in so far as these can be determined by the translator. It is a method which studies a discourse a) in its context of situation, taking into account participants, purpose, field, culture, etc. of both source and target texts and b) in terms of its structure and its individual constituents, and by interpretation of context and structure and constituents assists in determining the meaning of the source text and fulfilling the requirements of the target text.

Before defining the components of discourse analysis, it is apposite to summarise what the appropriateness of such a method is in relation to translating. Discourse analysis provides for the teacher, student, and professional translator resources for achieving objectivity and for making and justifying decisions. It provides a strategy for relating the problems and

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processes of discourse and the specific concerns and objectives of the translator. It can be applied in translating to all kinds of texts, whether scientific, legal, religious, etc.

The components of discourse analysis

The following definitions of the components of discourse analysis have a dual purpose: to describe the material on which the translator works - the source text, and to define the components of the method he will put into practice.

The basic unit of language which is the material for the translator is the *text*. This is a complex multi-dimensional structure of varying length which may be defined as an expression of culture, situation, and language. A text is rarely composed of only one type of writing. It is rather an amalgam of various *text types*, for example, narration, exposition, argumentation, instruction. To illustrate the hybrid nature of the structure of a text, consider the composition of an advertisement. This is typically exposition (description of the product), followed by argumentation (statement of why it is a good product), followed by instruction (recommendation to purchase the product). Texts are, however, seldom as straightforward as this in their structure, nor are text types always so easily identifiable.

A text has *texture*, which is provided by cohesive relations within the text. These are established when the interpretation of one element is dependent on the interpretation of another. Texture reflects the *coherence* and *cohesion* of the text.

Context and *co-text* are essential constituents of a text and are indispensable factors in determining its purpose. The former term is used to refer to the

combined influences of participants, purpose, particular situation, environment or circumstances, and culture, from which the text is produced. Hatim and Mason (1990) define context in terms of three essential dimensions: communicative, pragmatic, and semiotic.

The communicative dimension includes *field, mode* and *tenor.* The pragmatic dimension includes, *intentionality, speech acts, implicature,* and *inference.* The semiotic dimension includes *texts, discourses, genres, signs, intertextuality.* It is important to bear in mind that while such categories can be identified as discrete components, they are nevertheless mutually dependent and combine to form a unit, the unit being the text. Co-text is the text surrounding a single word or phrase or sentence. Its importance lies in the fact that meaning is derived from or constrained by co-text. Indeed, in attempting to interpret a text when contextual details concerning time, place or purpose are not available, the translator may from the co-text be able to reconstruct some part of the original context.

Frequently, the term *discourse* is used interchangeably with the term text. It is perhaps useful to distinguish the two as follows: text is a structured sequence of language, whereas discourse is, more precisely, language in use. Discourse analysis is, then, the analysis of language in use. Thus the translator is processing language in use, in communication. Discourse is the amalgam of constituents of a communicative act. Discourses are ways of communicating which are identifiable because they manifest similar patterns of lexical and formal features. Hence one can identify bureaucratic discourse, racist discourse, trade union discourse, feminist discourse, diplomatic discourse, etc.

Discourses contain different types of text. Political discourse, for example, typically contains a variety of text types: exposition, persuasion, refutation, etc. Moreover, because the language of politics often conceals a purpose different from that which is apparent from a cursory reading of the text; one might find that one text type conceals another. Exposition may mask persuasion, for instance. To this can be added a further and related characteristic of discourse. Typically, discourses express participants' involvement or attitude to a particular subject. Thus, a politician may appear in some policy document to be following the ideology related to his political party, but he may, in reality, be using narration to mask disagreement with the particular policy, or aspects of it. He has achieved this by shifting from one text type to another within the political discourse. Awareness of the change of focus is vital for the translator in the effort to achieve accuracy and fidelity concerning the source text and the target text.[1]

Two further text related types of communicative acts which are important concepts in translating are *genre* and *register*. Certain types of texts have similar generic constituents - specific forms and meanings which have been established by social convention. Thus, obtaining information about train times at a railway information desk has a recognisable and distinctive pattern of exchanges. A business letter has a particular set of constituents which have to be matched in the target text with the set of constituents obtaining

[1] It would perhaps be more appropriate, since the translator is processing language in use, to talk of source discourse and target discourse rather than source text and target text, but the latter are in general use in the literature, and there seems to be no good reason to alter the usage.

in this genre in the target language. Texts, in other words, have generic constraints, which need to be observed in the appropriate form in the target text.

Registers are varieties of language within a whole language and are determined according to situations of use. One can discern different patterns of grammatical and lexical features used in different types of communicative activity. The discoursal variables involved in register identification are field, or area of language activity, mode, or medium of language activity, and tenor, or level of formality involved or required in the specific language activity. The three aspects of language use are interdependent.

Hatim and Mason (1990) distinguish between field and subject matter. To illustrate this, they give the example of the political field of discourse which may deal with various subject matters such as law and order, taxation, foreign policy.

For the translator the three variables assume particular significance if they have to be altered according to the task that he is required to carry out. A translator may be asked to write an abstract in a target language from a conference paper delivered in a different language. In such a situation, the changes involved in the shift in mode and tenor, from oral code to written code, and subjective tenor to impartial tenor, would have to be carefully observed.

To a certain extent, the pragmatic dimension of language has been covered, since it refers to language in use, language in context. Pragmatics may be defined as the communicative use of language, which means that it involves

discoursal aspects of language. In addition, pragmatics refers to aspects of the communicative act which are related specifically to the participants and how they use and react to a particular communicative act. These are aspects such as implicature, inference, assumption, presupposition, etc. These discourse constituents describe what participants are thinking and doing, that is, inferring, assuming, etc. not what the relation is between one sentence and another. The participant can be certain of rules and conventions in language communication and knows that if deviated from, then there is a need to infer, to assume, etc. in order to determine the implicature.

For the translator, however, this aspect of language use poses a problem in that with a written text the communicative activity is typically delayed since the writer and reader are not present when the text is being processed by the translator. Consequently, the interpretation by the translator risks being only partial. The purpose of the translator/discourse analyst in this situation is to determine as much as possible of the context. This is essential since the translator is moving into the realms of uncertainty and is compelled to turn to the identifiable and secure components of pragmatic discourse such as co-text, cohesion, etc.

Within the pragmatic dimension is included the concept of speech acts, which occur when certain types of sentences can be regarded as the performing of an act. For example, if a user promises that he or she will be with someone at 2.30 the promising indicates an action the user intends to undertake. If the verb is omitted the speech act might, depending upon the context, be a threat, a warning, an apology, and indeed one speech act may perform a variety of functions.

Various classifications of speech acts have been offered, for example, that of Traugott and Pratt (Hatim and Mason, 1990), who categorise speech acts as representatives (state, tell, insist), expressives (admire, define), verdictives (assess, estimate), directives (order, request), commissives (promise, pledge), declaratives (baptise, dismiss). The translator must ensure that the meaning of a speech act identified in a source text is conveyed appropriately, in the target text. Once again, the translator has to rely on available co-text and context in the attempt to achieve an accurate interpretation, and to preserve the speech act of the source text in the target text. Ambiguity resulting from error in determining a speech act, for instance, where a command (directive) is given to a young police officer but is perceived by him as a different speech act, say admiration (expressive), could have awkward consequences. If such intentions or purposes of language are not recognised for what they really are, misinterpretations can occur.

For a text to be perceived as text it must exhibit characteristics which reflect its coherence, that is, its well-formednmess, its logical relations, its continuity. Coherence is the term used to describe the conceptual relations underlying the surface text, relations that are evident in devices of cohesion present in the surface text.

Coherence is generally assumed to exist by participants involved in communication. Participants perceive coherence through a range of cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and through the cohesion evident in lexical fields, and syntactic and grammatical structures (Brown and Yule, 1983).

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There are also markers of cohesion which indicate that the text producer is expressing concession, reservation, consequence, etc. (however, but, consequently). Such cohesive devices are not necessarily explicit, however, and a text can be totally coherent, despite their absence. When this type of cohesive device is lacking, the translator has to rely on co-text to interpret the logical direction of the text, just as he must when these devices are used, perfectly acceptably, with a meaning which differs from that contained in a dictionary definition. To put it slightly differently, idiolectal or deviant use of such cohesive devices may pose a problem for the translator. A further problem lies in the fact that different languages have different ways of expressing cohesion.

Together, coherence and cohesion constitute *texture*: texture indicates that a text is cohesive and coherent.

The third dimension of context is the semiotic dimension. Semiotics is the study of signs. These may be paintings, musical notes, road signs, morse code, etc. Above all, for the translator they are words, and more precisely, words used meaningfully. Hence, a text is understood as a system or structure of verbal signs manifesting coherence through cohesion. An individual sign occurs within a system, or text, and derives its meaning through interaction with other signs, or words, in that text.

Interdependence of the dimensions of context

People communicate within a context. Hatim and Mason (1990) describe the relation between the dimensions of context surrounding and influencing a text as follows: there are lexical and syntactic choices made within the field (mode, tenor, etc.) of a given discourse ... determined by pragmatic

considerations to do with the purposes of utterances, real world conditions ... to perceive the full communicative thrust of an utterance, we need to appreciate not only the pragmatic action, but also a semiotic dimension which regulates the interaction of ... various discoursal elements as 'signs'. The interaction takes place ... between various signs within texts and ... between the producer of these signs and the intended receivers.' In other words, pragmatics and semiotics are interdependent. The translator interprets and processes the intentions of the writer of the source text by analysis of the pragmatic values - such as field, mode, tenor, of individual items and then of entire sequences in the text. The organising principle of a text, which by definition is the result or product of some communicative need and action, brings into play a whole network of meanings acquired when interaction occurs between one sign and another and between the newly acquired meaning, the new sign, and another sign or signs. Thus there is a constant process of development and accumulation of meanings. But these entities are always the product of co-textual and contextual influences and of reference back to previous texts or discourses. The association and interaction of present text and previous texts is known as intertextuality. The difficulty for the translator is precisely that there exists the tendency for producers of texts to be influenced by texts they have experienced. Such influences add yet another complication as the translator attempts to determine the meaning of the signs of which the text is composed.

The translator/discourse analyst

The translator acts as an intermediary whos responsibility it is to interpret the meaning of a source text and transfer that meaning to a target text. He is, therefore, working with two, or three, cultures - those of the source language, his own, and perhaps a third, if the target language is not his

mother tongue. His processing of the source text is likely to be at a more detailed level than that of the average reader. He is more alert to possible ambiguities, and he has to maintain impartiality in his task.

The translator is a discourse analyst throughout the process of translating - identifying and interpreting contextual, linguistic, and co-textual features which influence the texts on which he is working - the focus moving from the processing and understanding of the source text towards the processing and creating of the target text. Working at both macro and micro levels, the translator exercises caution in interpretation as the texts unfold. There are bound to be areas of dissimilarity between texts, since cultures, and, consequently, perceptions of reality, differ, and since languages are never identical systems.

The pragmatic dimension of discourse analysis is in play when the translator makes assumptions about the source text. He is dealing with possible implications, he is inferring meaning. He is working with a writer's references, references to something with which only the writer is totally familiar. It is important that register is identified, that is, that context is reconstructed through identification of field, mode, and tenor. The problem is to find equivalent means in the target language so as to convey appropriately the elements of register.

Discoursal attitudes in the source text must be observed as far as is possible, as must any cultural constraints of the target language. The process of translating is not a matter of matching source speech act with target speech act, but rather transferring the entire act of discourse from source to target language, and this furthermore, according to the requirements

of the client for whom the translator is working. He may, for example, be asked to translate an advertisement, the purpose of which is to sell a product. But the client may wish only to have information concerning the product: he may not be interested in the 'sales pitch'. The communicative purposes of the source and target texts are quite different. The translator has to decide what the communicative priorities of the texts are and adjust the target text accordingly. Thus it can be said that his choices, his decisions, are influenced or motivated. This can lead to omissions, additions, and modifications, in order to achieve semiotic equivalence. Such alterations are acceptable only in terms of a) the meaning intended in the source text, and b) the constraints of the purpose of the target text. To identify the meaning and the constraints the translator needs to be able to rely on secure and well-founded means of interpreting texts, such as are provided by discourse analysis. Discourse analysis offers resources to determine the communicative intention, the pragmatic factors, and the semiotic relations witin texts - source and target - which are the translator's material.

Conclusion

There are two fundamental advances in translation studies provided by discourse analysis: it holds that the relevant language unit for translating is the entire text, not the single word or sentence, and that context - communicative, pragmatic, and semiotic - and co-text are, quite simply, indispensable constituents for interpreting and processing the source and target texts.

Discourse analysis has then moved on from former approaches which perceived

 translating as applying grammatical rules and referring to a dictionary. In a

sense, it has indicated the limitations of the bilingual dictionary as a tool in translating. Until dictionaries are able to provide a full contextual reference for each item in all contexts including uses that are figurative, metaphorical, idiolectal, they torm only a preliminary stage in the interpreting and processing of text.

Discourse analysis may be said to constitute a successful attempt to deal with a web of relationships in which the meaning of single items is determined according to their relations to each other and within the broader context of two cultures and two languages. Hence, discourse analysis is not an approach which analyses in order to separate and detach, but which analyses in an attempt to see items in their textual and contextual unity in order to determine their true meaning. The approach does not offer solutions to problems in translating, but it surely assists in their solving. Through insights into the amalgam that is language, it offers the possibility of processing text, objectively, and making decisions about translating which involve omission, addition, and modification, which can be justified and defended.

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